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Faced with local gas prices approaching \$3.70 per gallon, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-Highland Park, on Friday outlined a six-point legislative plan that he said would help bring prices down.

Kirk's proposals range from construction of new gasoline refineries in the U.S. to increased tax credits for cutting-edge hybrid vehicles.

"Federal action is needed to help lower gas prices," Kirk said. "Congress should end boutique fuels' monopolies and expand refineries serving the Midwest. We need bipartisan action to increase conservation and promote the production of American-made fuels."

Kirk said having "overly complex" federal rules requiring 15 types of gasoline to be sold in different areas of the country contributes to shortages and high prices, especially in the Chicago area where only reformulated gasoline blended with ethanol may be sold.

As a result, when there are refinery-related supply problems such as the ones currently being experienced, "gasoline from other markets cannot be transported and sold at lower prices," Kirk said.

Kirk said the problem could be addressed with the passage by Congress of the proposed Boutique Fuels Reduction Act and Motorists Bill of Rights. He said he supports limiting the number of gasoline formulas to the most environmentally friendly options.

Kirk also called for the construction of more gas refineries in the U.S., noting that there have been no new refineries built since 1976. The current supply shortage has been compounded by problems such as a fire at the BP refinery in Whiting, Ind., which is now running at half its usual output.

Kirk supports legislation that would designate at least three closed military bases as potential sites for new refineries, and require redevelopment plans to consider new refinery construction.

Congress should also pass legislation to increase fuel economy standards 50 percent by 2016. He said a current proposal to hike corporate average fuel economy standards would save the average family \$2,000 per year, save the nation millions in gas costs and improve air quality.

Kirk said he is also backing legislation to provide a \$4,000 tax credit per purchase for plug-in hybrid vehicles, such as new models created by Argonne National Laboratory, to stimulate consumer interest in such technologies, which "dramatically reduce gasoline consumption."

Finally, Kirk said he is supporting legislation to increase incentives for the expanded distribution of E85 fuel, which consists of 85 percent ethanol and is considerably cheaper than regular gas, and the advancement of other alternative fuels and vehicles.

Kirk said he feels there is a "pretty good" chance that most or all of the bills will be passed by Congress based on the success of previous legislation paving the way for some of the pending bills.